

## Secretary's Report on the Activities of Eastern Harps G.A.A. Club 2020

A Cathaoirleach agus a dhaoine uaisle, tá fáilte romhaibh go léir chuig ár gCruinniú Ginearálta Bliantúil don bhliain 2020.

Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, I welcome you all to our AGM for the year 2020.

It's hard to know where to begin when trying to describe the year that was 2020. One thing for sure, it turned out to be a much different year than what was anticipated at its beginning. With Covid-19 coming into our lives in March and disrupting almost everything, training and matches were suspended for large parts of the year. At one point, there were doubts about whether any games would get back up and running. However, as the year progressed and restrictions began to ease, GAA, along with other sports, was given the green light to recommence. This gave our teams a chance to complete their championships and ensured that there wouldn't be as many blank spaces in this report as was once feared.

Like almost everything this year, our AGM has also been somewhat affected by Covid-19. As restrictions state that gatherings to the extent needed to host our AGM are not permitted, we have had to turn online in order to conduct this year's meeting. This is just another slight adjustment we have had to make, in a year where we have learned to do a lot of things differently. Nevertheless, it gives me great pleasure to present this report on the activities of Eastern Harps GAA Club for 2020.

Before I begin, I want to pay tribute to my predecessor in the role of club Secretary, Ciarán McGovern, who regrettably had to step down in October. Ciarán had been fulfilling this role with distinction for the better part of two years, and there's no doubt he's left big shoes to fill. I wish to thank Ciarán for all the hard work he's put into this role during his tenure and personally, for all the help and support he's given to me while taking over the position. This role is a new challenge for me, and I hope it's one I'll be able to fulfil to somewhere near the standard that's been set by Ciarán and my other predecessors.

2020 was a disappointing year on the playing field for our senior and junior men, as both teams were relegated to intermediate and junior B respectively for 2021. For the senior ladies, they will be disappointed, but should also be immensely proud of what they achieved. The ladies lost the Intermediate Championship final, but with such a young team, this was an incredible achievement and they will have gained a lot of experience from this.

For our underage teams it was a relatively successful year, with seven out of our eight underage teams reaching championship finals. There was success for the U12, U16 and minor girls, while the U14 girls, U16 boys and minor boys lost out in their championship finals. The U14 boys' final and U12 boys' semi-finals were firstly postponed due to inclement weather, and by the time there were pitches available again, the country had been placed in another lockdown and all club activities were ceased. With these games due to be played in early 2021, hopefully there may yet be more silverware from 2020 to report on.

### **Senior Men**

With no league games played before the Covid-19 stoppage of activity, there was only one warm-up game before championship action began once play resumed in June. This was a high scoring re-arranged Kiernan Cup quarter-final against Shamrock Gaels – a team we would face again in the group stages of the championship – that Gaels went on to win by four points. This meant that all attentions turned to the championship where we were drawn in Group 1 alongside St. Mary's, Shamrock Gaels, Tubbercurry and eventual finalists, Drumcliffe/Rosses Point. The record books will show that this team were to lose all their championship games this year, but results don't always

tell the full story, and there can be no doubting the players' commitment and effort throughout the year. We were competitive in a number of our games, and as Paul Judge notes in his comprehensive report of the senior team's year in this year's AGM Booklet, many of our games were still in the balance until the final quarter. However, the results don't lie, and the reality is that we were unable to get over the line throughout the group stages and subsequent relegation stages of our championship campaign this year. After the completion of the group stage, Coolaney/Muliabreena awaited in the relegation semi-final, and subsequently, Geevagh in the final. These, like many of this team's games this year, were somewhat tight encounters, where the concession of early goals in both games, unfortunately, left our lads with too much ground to make up. These results mean that this team will compete at the intermediate grade for next year. As this year's senior league didn't take place, we will again compete in Division 1 in that competition next year. This will give this team an opportunity to compete against some of the best teams in the county, which will undoubtedly be good preparation for what's to come in the Intermediate Championship. There's no doubt that there's lots of work ahead, and I hope this team's players and management can have a much better year in 2021 and beyond. Many thanks to the work and commitment that was put in from this team's manager James Mitchell and his backroom team of Paul Dwyer, Mikey O'Grady, Kevin Cryan, Paul Judge, Patrick Gallagher and Cathal O'Grady who left no stones unturned in their preparations. I would also like to thank Padraig Henry who was the Covid Officer for this team. Des Horan, once again, provided first aid our senior team as well as for our junior and minor teams. Des's presence on the side-line is of massive benefit to all teams he's involved with. I wish to sincerely thank Des, on behalf of the club, for his services this year and I hope to see him continue in this much valued role in the future.

2020 was about much more than the events on the pitch, however, and this team can be very proud about the money that they raised for two very worthy charities – Ballymote Nursing Home and CLASP – during the first Covid lockdown. This fundraiser also provided entertainment on social media, and was a great source of enjoyment during the uncertain times in which it took place. There will be more details about this later on in the report.

### **Junior Men**

With a number of players deemed ineligible as the season went on through competing at senior grade as well as some injuries, player availability hampered our junior team's year. They were drawn in a group with Cloonacool, St. Patrick's and St. Mary's, with action on the pitch getting up and running on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August. The group got off to a tough start, with heavy defeats at the hands of Cloonacool's and St. Patrick's respective first teams. It's often tough coming up against clubs' first teams at this grade and, on these occasions, the Skreen/Dromard and Cloonacool teams proved to be too strong. The players' efforts on the day couldn't be faulted, however, and a battling spirit was shown right throughout both of these games. St. Mary's second team awaited in the third round in what turned out to be a very competitive game between two evenly matched teams. In a game that could have gone either way, our lads had the misfortune to be on the wrong end of a one point defeat, with a last minute St. Mary's goal deciding the game in their favour. Three defeats meant that a relegation final against Shamrock Gaels in Scarden would now have to be contested. Unfortunately, this too ended in defeat meaning this team will compete in the Junior B Championship next year.

There's no doubt having a competitive second team is of great benefit to any club, and it can prove to be a stepping stone to the senior team. I think I speak for everyone when I say I hope to see Eastern Harps competing at junior A level again in the near future. Thanks to the junior team's manager Kevin Cryan and his backroom team for all their efforts throughout the year.

## **Senior Ladies**

Our senior ladies had a good year on the pitch, which culminated in getting to the Intermediate Championship final in September. Due to their first three league games being cancelled for various reasons and the subsequent Covid-19 stoppage, this team's first outings came in the form of challenge matches in June in preparation for the first round of championship. These challenge games as well as training – which was given a boost numbers-wise from the U16s and minors – stood this team in good stead, however, as they started their championship with a hard-fought win against Drumcliffe. This win set the tone for what was to come, and it was followed by home wins over Owenmore Gaels and Eoghan Rua as well as victory against C.T. Gaels in Tubbercurry. This four-game winning run ensuring this team went through their group unbeaten. With a final berth against Eoghan Rua secured, there was much excitement leading up to this game. Unfortunately, it didn't go our way as Eoghan Rua, who took advantage of a strong wind in the first half, ultimately left the girls with too much ground to make up despite a spirited second half comeback. With a number of young players making the step-up to adult football this year, hopefully this group will continue to develop as a team in the coming years.

There's no doubt that playing any match behind closed doors, let alone a county final, can be an underwhelming experience. However, such were the conditions and regulations that were in place this year, and from where we were in March, it could be argued that it was a bonus that games got to go ahead in any circumstances. This didn't mean that the club's supporters from near and far didn't get behind this team, however. In the lead up to the final, club supporters turned online in order to wish the girls well and offer their support virtually. This created a great buzz and went some way towards replicating the build-up to a county final that would be expected under normal circumstances. Thanks to everyone who made a video, put out flags and signs or put forward their message of support in any other way to wish this team well. Also, for supporters who couldn't attend the games in person, Orla Dorrian's excellently written match reports set the scene and superbly detailed the happenings on the pitch. Not only did Orla report on the senior matches, she also penned reports for U14, U16 and minor games, with a few of these also being published in the Sligo Champion. Well done and thanks to Orla for providing these reports throughout the year. I'd also like to thank our excellent photographer, Aisling Stephenson, for taking many wonderful photos at many matches and other club ventures throughout the year.

Keeping players motivated and engaged in what was a stop-start year didn't come without its challenges, I'm sure, so huge credit goes to this team's manager Gary Ward, Stephen Powell and Covid Officer Deirdre Gillen for all their hard work.

## **Underage Football**

### **Minor Boys**

A young minor team, with over half the panel still U16, competed in the B Championship this year. This team were competitive in all their games, and they can maybe count themselves a little unlucky, as many of their losses came by the narrowest of margins. After this team came through their group of Owenmore Gaels, Curry, Geevagh/St. Michael's and Shamrock Gaels with one win from four, they went into the Shield semi-final. A very good performance followed, where they travelled to Tourelstrane and had six points to spare over their opponents to see them progressing to the final. It was back to Tourlestrane GAA Park again for the final, which took place in early September. Unfortunately for our lads, they were once again on the wrong side of a tight game as they lost by one point on a score line of 3-12 to 2-14. With a lot of this team still having at least one more year of minor football, hopefully there will be a lot more to come from them. Thanks to this

team's management of Michael Hannon, Errol Flynn, Colin McGill, James Soden as well as Covid Officer Linda Hannon for their hard work throughout the year.

### **Minor Girls**

The minor girls had a successful year, where they fulfilled their goal of retaining the B Championship. The girls were drawn in a group alongside St. Molaise Gaels, Shamrock Gaels, Geevagh (who withdrew from the championship early) and C.T. Gaels. They went on to record wins in three out of their four games, with their sole loss coming against Shamrock Gaels in round two. While this was a disappointing defeat for this team, it was one which they would get a chance to make amends for as the season progressed. With the girls going on to secure their place in the final with a win over C.T Gaels in their final group game, they would get the opportunity to renew acquaintances with Shamrock Gaels, as they were set to meet them again in the championship decider. This game, which was played in perfect September conditions in Coola, turned out to be a great game of football, and the game was in the balance right throughout. However, the Harps girls eventually went on to win by two points to ensure that the title was heading back to Keash. This also gave rise to one of the standout photos of the year: this team and their management, with the B Championship trophy in tow, at the majestic caves of Keash. The experience these girls got from training with the seniors – and the experience some got from contributing on the pitch for this team – undoubtedly stood to them when it mattered most. Hopefully these girls will continue to develop as footballers as many make the step up to adult football next year. Thanks again to this team's management of Gary Ward, Stephen Powell and Deirdre Gillen for all their efforts.

### **U16 Boys**

The U16 boys had a very mixed championship campaign. In the first round they were beaten by a very strong Calry/St Joseph's team. In the second round our lads ran the eventual table toppers and local rivals Ballymote/Bunninadden to within one point. This result gave our lads great confidence and they went on to win the next two games quite comfortably. In the last round of games the U16s lost out to a stronger Easkey/St Farnan's team. With that result, it meant the team finished in a three-way tie for third spot, with Harps finishing in fourth place on score difference.

With the team finishing in fourth spot, it meant that the U16s qualified to the U16 B Shield semi-final where Castleconner were the opponents. In a very entertaining and end to end game, the Harps U16s held on for a two point win. The team would then face Coolaney/Mullinabreena in the U16 B Shield final and the old phrase "goals wins games" comes to mind, and this was the case in this game. Coolaney/Mullinabreena scored one goal just before half time and two more goals in the first ten minutes in the second half. This just drained our lads, and while they never recovered from these setbacks, they kept fighting until the end. Thanks to the U16 coaches which consisted of Errol Flynn, James Soden, Evan Lavin and Michael Hannon. It was a difficult year with Covid-19, but the lads prepared the team as best as they could and just fell short in the end.

### **U16 Girls**

The U16 girls had a successful year, with their season ending on a high when they claimed the B Shield on home soil in September. With the league competition shelved due to the shortened year, this team's sole focus was on the B Championship. They had to wait until their third game to record their first win, however, as St. Molaise Gaels narrowly defeated them in their opening round and Coolera/Strandhill came out on top in their second group game. Their fortunes began to change however, with a late rally seeing them overcome St. Nathy's in their final group game. These results meant that the shield competition was the direction this team's year headed in. After defeating St. John's in the semi-final, their season ended the way it began, as St. Molaise Gaels awaited in the final. This time, the result went the way of the Harps girls on a wet day in Keash to see them crowned shield champions. As was the case with the minors, training with the senior ladies was great preparation for games against their own age group. Not only did this team train with the

seniors and minors, many played important roles for both these teams in their respective championships also. All this bodes well for their future development. Thanks to this team's management team of Benny Connolly, Nicole Cosgrove and Neil Molloy for their work with this team.

### **U14 Boys**

I mentioned briefly about the misfortune the U14 boys' team had to endure this year (with their U14 A final being cancelled and subsequently put-off until next year) at the start of this report and Ronan Higgins provides more details of their year in our AGM booklet, so I don't intend to cover their season in as much detail here. This team did manage to put in some impressive performances throughout the year, however, and recorded wins in all their games, many of which by big margins. Prior to the commencement of their championship, this group also tested themselves with a few challenge matches against teams from neighbouring counties. Hopefully this team can go on to achieve their goal of winning the U14 A title when the final is due to be played early next year. Many thanks to this team's coaches Ronan Higgins, Keith Carty, Shaun Dorrian and Ross Donovan for looking after this team.

### **U14 Girls**

The U14 girls had a good year. Competing in the A Championship, this team were drawn in a group with Coolera/Strandhill, St. Nathy's, C.T. Gaels, St. Mary's and Eoghan Rua. The girls went on to win three out of their five matches, with the wins coming against St. Nathy's in round two as well as St. Mary's and C.T. Gaels in rounds four and five respectively. These results meant that the girls had qualified for the A cup semi-final, which was set to be a repeat of their round two group tie, as St. Nathy's were once again their opponents. This game saw a repeat of the result also, with the girls recording their second win over this team to book their place in the final against Eoghan Rua. Unfortunately, the final didn't go the way of the Eastern Harps girls, as Eoghan Rua went on to win by six points. While this result meant that the girls' season on the pitch was completed, the team's management had some other activities lined up for this group. The football field was swapped for the water, and a Saturday morning of stand-up paddle boarding was enjoyed by the players and management in October. Thanks to this team's management team of Eimear Henry, Dawn McGowan, Patricia McDonagh, Linda Kiernan and Pat Conheady for their efforts throughout the year.

### **U12 Boys**

As was the case last year, numbers were sufficient for two U12 teams to be entered in competitions this year. These teams were split up into an U12 and an U11 team (with a few U10s bolstering the U11s' numbers). Once back into competitive action, these teams had a good year on the pitch, with each team having only one loss on their respective records. The story of these teams' seasons is not quite finished, however, and as was mentioned at the start of this report, their respective semi-finals are due to be played early next year. As a token of the management's appreciation for their players' efforts during the year, the lads were presented with new, Connolly's VW-sponsored training tops at their last training session. Thanks to these teams' coaches Fintan McGowan, Damien Carty, Marcus Jackson, Peter Mitchell, Francis Candon, Seamus Hannon and Adrian Cooke for looking after them during the year.

### **U12 Girls**

The U12 girls had an enjoyable year, and a one that ended in great fashion, as they secured the B Shield. After the stoppage in play, it was back to competitive action in July for this team with a busy schedule of five games over five consecutive weeks. This team went on to record wins in four out of these five games, as they came out on top against Owenmore Gaels, Ballisodare, St. Michael's and Geevagh. Despite a loss in their opening round to Shamrock Gaels, this team went on to qualify for a semi-final against Drumcliffe. This game, played in Keash, was something of an epic, with

Drumcliffe eventually going on to win by two points after extra time. However, the disappointment of this defeat was somewhat softened by the news that the Shield final lay in store. This saw the girls facing Curry away in their final game of the season, with the win for Harps ensuring this team picked up the Shield competition. Thanks to this team's management of Mary Carty and Sam O'Gara, who were assisted at various times during the year by Linda Donovan, Sarah Gallagher and Jacintha O'Gara for looking after them during the year.

### **U11/U10/U8/U6**

These age groups had a successful, and indeed, a busy year despite the circumstances. This got started with a successful indoor winter programme which ran from October 2019 until March of this year. As well as this, a nursery programme for 4-6 year olds was held upstairs in the clubhouse during the months of November and December – this had the added benefit of helping to promote new registrations. When the pandemic hit, great efforts were made by these teams' coaches to provide their young players with opportunities to continue to develop their skills at home, in a fun and safe way, during lockdown. Social media was utilised here, with weekly skills challenges being put up as well as training and skills videos for the children to practice at home being sent out. Special thanks goes to Ross Donovan for the putting up the very popular weekly videos and for delivering prizes to many children. There's no doubt that it's of great benefit to have Ross's expertise and guidance at this crucial age group for our club. Once the return to play was announced, these teams got going with outfield training, which took place once weekly on Saturday mornings. Numbers were good, and with many new registrations averaged at seventy children per session. As well as training sessions, the U8s and U10s had games against neighbouring clubs: Bunninadden, Ballymote, Tourlestrane and Ballaghaderreen. The U11 girls competed in five nine-a-side league games also. Thanks to all the coaches who helped out at this level. There are too many to mention here, however, Linda has provided details of all in her report in the AGM booklet. I hope to see all these coaches back for 2021, and as always, any new coaches are welcome.

### **G4M&O**

The "Gaelic4Mothers&Others" had a quieter year than usual on account of the restrictions. Monica Henry Beirne has provided a great report of this group's year in our AGM booklet, so I don't intend to cover their year in as much detail here. What I would like to say, however, is that it was great that this group, like all other groups, were able to have a playing year, even if it was a slightly shortened one. It was heartening that some new faces joined this group also. It should also be noted that they managed to squeeze one game in, against local rivals Shamrock Gaels, which proved to be an enjoyable occasion. Let's hope 2021 has more in store for this very important group in our club.

### **County Commitments**

I'd like to congratulate Paul Taylor on managing the Sligo senior team for his second year this year. It was a year that wasn't without its challenges, not least the recent decision that had to be taken to forfeit the Connacht SFC semi-final against Galway. As always, Paul conducted himself with the utmost professionalism and represented the club with distinction. Recently, Paul announced that he will be stepping down from this role, and I would like to wish Paul well with all his future endeavours. Paul's expertise and knowledge is a valuable asset to our club, and there's no doubt that it would be great to see Paul continuing to share his wealth of experience with other coaches and the younger generations of the club in the future.

Alan Davey represented the club by being part of the Sligo senior panel this year, as did Lisa Casey and Megan McCormack who were members of the ladies' panel. On the underage side: Kyle Cosgrove and Tomás Tahney (U20); Matt Henry, Dylan Walsh and James Kiernan (minor); and Donal Mitchell (U16) all represented the club. For the ladies, the club was represented by: Orlaith

Connolly (minor); Emma Hannon, Riona Hannon and Maeve Molloy (U16); as well as Aoife Lyons and Tara McGowan (U14).

### **Development**

Even though a lot of the work had been done in 2019, there was still some work to be done in order to complete the clubhouse. The biggest task left is the installation of the lift which will significantly boost the clubhouse. Although the lift has to be installed, there were still other jobs to be done and thanks to the development committee, they are making sure all this work is done and will be done.

The development committee are always working hard behind the scenes and researching different grants and initiatives that the club could benefit from. The most recent grant success was the approval of a Rural Development Programme grant courtesy of Sligo LCDC. This grant requires the club to contribute 25% towards the project. This grant will enable the club to upgrade the building even more and make it more appealing for more than club use.

There are more exciting ideas that the development committee have, and hopefully 2021 will bring those ideas into reality. Thanks again to this very active committee who are always working tirelessly behind the scenes. Not even Covid-19 can stop this committee.

### **Eastern Harps' fundraising challenge for CLASP and Ballymote Community Nursing Unit**

The senior men were only willing to get involved in a fundraiser for two local organisations when they were asked. As all charities and government funded organisations were running short on funds, the club organised a fundraising event for CLASP and Ballymote Community Nursing Unit. The senior men took on the role of participating in an event while keeping up their fitness for a possible return to play after Covid-19.

The senior management divided the senior group into two teams. The two teams were then paired off with a member from the other team. The event ran for two weeks with each member having to beat the other member's distance covered over the two weeks. When the two weeks were over, the winner from each pairing donated a sum and the loser of each pairing had to donate double that sum. The event was made public on all our social media pages, and the progress of each team was also uploaded. The event was available for anyone to donate via a GoFundMe link. The event was just one of many events organised by GAA clubs throughout the country, but the Eastern Harps fundraiser made national media – most notably by the Hoganstand.com website – with thanks to a novel idea by Ross Donovan, when he and his son Michael decided to go on a go-kart run for the fundraiser. The two lads covered over 10km on a go-kart, and this made many headlines throughout the county and country.

Another highlight from the event was our Bord na Óg Chairman Mikey O'Grady running from his home to Drury's Pub and back five times. This was a rare occurrence for Mikey: to go as far as Drury's and not have a drink! This side event also got a lot of attention within the club, and thanks to Mikey for his contribution to the event.

When the event was over and all the donations were totalled, the fundraiser gathered €13,216, which meant each charity received over €6,608 each. These funds were greatly appreciated by both organisations, and a presentation was made to both charities at the clubhouse on the 10<sup>th</sup> of June while maintaining social distancing guidelines.

Thanks to all those who donated to this fundraiser, and thanks to the senior lads who took on the challenge with both hands. Thanks also to anyone who contributed in any way to this fundraiser and who made it a massive success for two very worthy and local causes.

## **Bingo**

The local bingo in Gurteen hall every Friday night is a huge benefit to have in the area and to the club. The club's portion of monies raised goes towards the repayments for the clubhouse loan, and without the money the bingo has raised for the club over the last number of years, it is safe to say the club would not be in as good of a position as it is in now. It is very important that everyone supports the bingo when they can, as this is a very important fundraiser for the club. Bingo is not everyone's cup of tea but it is a cheap night out and, who knows, you might even win a few quid and as they say: "if you're not in you can't win".

Like everything in 2020, the bingo was also dealt a blow due to Covid-19 in March, and had to regrettably close its doors. The bingo provides a great social outlet for many people in the community and outside of the community, and needless to say that many of the patrons were very disappointed but understood the difficult decision to close the doors. When restrictions were lifted, the very active and creative committee came up with a novel idea of organising a drive-in bingo which began in August, and was only running for a few weeks until the country was placed in lockdown once again. To organise a drive-in bingo during Covid-19 brought its own complications, but once again, the bingo committee made every effort to make it possible. Although it was only running for a few weeks, it lifted people's spirits to just get out and mingle with others once again, albeit in a car park.

During the first lockdown, the Gurteen bingo committee remained active and organised a fundraiser for Pieta House. The fundraiser "Do a 'K' on the Longest Day" was held on the longest day of the year, the 21<sup>st</sup> of June. The bingo committee felt as there had been a fair share of tragedy in the community and amongst bingo patrons, that Pieta House was a worthy cause. It was great to see the Healthy Club committee hone in behind Gurteen Bingo, and hold a walk to the Carrowkeel tombs on the longest day in partnership with Gurteen Bingo committee. Thanks to Eamonn Clarke, Dee Gillen and Amy McGovern who organised refreshments for after the walk to Carrowkeel tombs for the many people who took part. Thanks to Gurteen Bingo committee who raised a total of €2,815 for Pieta House, and thanks to all who donated for a great cause.

The club owes a sincere debt of gratitude to its volunteers who have given up most of their Friday nights over the past couple of years to run bingo on behalf of and for the benefit of the club. Thank you to the Eastern Harps bingo committee. Hopefully Gurteen bingo will be back in some form for 2021.

## **Healthy Club**

The Healthy Club had a lot of ideas for a healthy and active 2020, but once again Covid-19 put a stop to most of the Healthy Club's plans.

Before Covid-19 took a hold on the country, our Healthy Club committee had held very successful rowing courses for men and Zumba classes for ladies. These all took place in the clubhouse, where we can successfully hold events like these now. Between the two courses, there was just short of 120 participants. The Healthy Club committee felt that Operation Transformation had run its course, and therefore came up with new ideas, those being rowing and Zumba classes, which proved to be very successful. Thanks to Sligo Sports and Recreation Partnership who donated the rowing machines for the men's rowing classes.

The Healthy Club only got to organise two monthly walks for 2020 due to inclement weather earlier on in the year and then Covid-19 restrictions hampered their plans to organise further walks. Thanks to all of the Healthy Club committee for their continuous work.

## **Pitch**

Shortly after the 2019 AGM, Eastern Harps GAA Club were awarded Sligo GAA Club Grounds of the Year and honourably, Connacht GAA Club Grounds of the Year. This award was received in Began by a very steady group of Padraig Henry, Tommy Taheny, Sean Scott, Seamus Hannon, Louis Carty, Tom Murray and John Cryan. With these awards also came some prize money, and little did we know in 2020 that these funds would be badly needed. The club received €1,500 from Sligo GAA and €2,500 from Connacht GAA. Thank you to Sligo GAA and Connacht GAA for choosing Eastern Harps as Club Grounds of the Year. Thanks to the pitch committee for making this happen due to their continuous work that makes our grounds one of the best in the county and now in Connacht.

As was the case in 2019, the club hosted championship games when restrictions were lifted and the club championship was given the all clear. The club hosted Ballymote and Bunninadden in the first round of the Intermediate Championship and Shamrock Gaels and Tourlestrane in the Junior A Championship. The club also hosted the ladies Junior final between Shamrock Gaels and Calry/St Joseph's. Thanks to the pitch committee for having the pitch in pristine condition on all occasions.

I'd like to thank a small committee of club members who took over looking after the pitch when our Fás workers were not permitted to attend due to Covid-19. It was very important that our pitch was looked after during this time, and those club members jumped at the opportunity. Again, I'd like to thank the pitch committee for the tremendous work they do to have the grounds looking so well and the pitch in such good condition.

## **Feile Peil Na nÓg**

Shortly after the 2019 AGM, our 2019 U13 team won the U13 A Championship. This meant that the lads would be representing Sligo and, more importantly, representing Eastern Harps in Feile Peil Na nÓg. The team and their coaches would have been looking forward to their journey to Derry/Donegal for the 2020 Feile, but like everything else in the country, this event fell to the dreaded Covid-19. The team and their coaches were absolutely gutted when they learned they could not represent Sligo and Eastern Harps in the much anticipated Feile Peil na nÓg.

This event is a tremendous one for any young player to attend and it's a massive achievement to qualify. For this group to lose out, through no fault of their own, is bitterly disappointing. There is no doubt that these lads will regroup when safe to do so, and that they will have many successful days ahead as long as they stay together and keep working hard as a team.

## **Referees**

At present we have three active referees in the club: Ciarán McGovern, Gavin Gairdner and Tom O'Connor. It is great to see members of our club taking up the mantle of this thankless but essential role. I would especially like to congratulate Ciarán, who this year had the honour of refereeing the Intermediate Championship final between St. Molaise Gaels and Curry. Being chosen for a game of such importance is testament to Ciarán's hard work and dedication as a referee, and I hope to see him get the opportunity to officiate many more such games in the future.

## **Annual Draw**

Congratulations to all the winners in our Annual Club Draw. There is €22,000 in prize money paid out every year with a first prize of €10,000. The money raised from this fundraiser is responsible for the day-to-day running of the club, and is vitally important to the club. There is a list of the 2020 Annual Club Draw winners in the AGM booklet.

I'd also like to thank those who have taken part and are currently in this draw. If anyone wishes to purchase a ticket for this draw, please contact any member of the executive.

### **Kerry McKeon Literary Awards**

Thanks to the McKeon family for allowing the club to proceed with the annual Kerry McKeon essay competition. This year, the McKeons sponsored trophies for each age group winner, and then the overall trophy was awarded to the best essay from all age groups. Again, with Covid-19, the participation numbers were slightly lower than previous years, but that did not stop it from being a very successful competition. Like a lot of events this year, the notification was sent to schools by email. Thanks and well done to all who took part and well done to all the winners. Thanks to the McKeon family for allowing the club to remember Kerry.

### **Underage Medal Presentation**

In January, there was a medal presentation held for all the winning underage teams in 2019. This included the U12 Girls C League winners, U13 Boys A Feile winners, U14 Girls B League winners, U16 Boys B Championship winners and the Minor Girls B Championship winners.

Thanks to Enda Smith from Boyle GAA Club, and 2019 captain of the Connacht Championship winning team Roscommon, who presented the medals on the night to the boys. It goes without saying all of the kids were in awe to be presented a medal by someone who has had a very successful GAA career to date, with a long list of GAA achievements on his CV at such a young age.

Thanks to Bernice Byrne from Geevagh GAA Club who also presented medals on the night to the girls. Bernice was a member of the Sligo ladies senior team in 2019. Bernice, like Enda, has also had a very successful GAA career to date, with a long list of GAA achievements.

### **Covid-19 Assistance Group**

Shortly after the announcement that the country was in lockdown due to Covid-19, there was a group in place to represent the club. This group included volunteers who were willing to assist the community or the most vulnerable in any way possible be it a shop delivery or pharmacy delivery. The group had sixteen volunteers who were ready for action once they were called upon. To have these volunteers ready to help our community out, without any hesitation in the middle of a global pandemic, is a credit to the club and it proves that the GAA is there for all of the community.

Although our services were not required as much as we had expected, the club would like to thank the sixteen members who agreed to help our very own community and most vulnerable in a time of need.

### **Ollie Shannon RIP**

This year marked the twentieth year since the sad passing of Ollie Shannon. In order to mark this occasion, the club had organised an anniversary mass. However, with the restrictions that Covid-19 placed on gatherings, this could not go ahead as planned. Instead, it was acknowledged on our club's social media pages with a posting of team photos as well an article written by the county board PRO about Ollie at the time of his death. This gave an opportunity to some of Ollie's many friends to pay tribute to him and to share some of their memories of him on the occasion of his anniversary.

### **Sponsors**

Every year we are very lucky to have such valued support from our premium sponsors. Year after year, they support the club in any way possible, and I hope that their support will continue for the foreseeable future. If there are any more companies or organisations who would like to become a premium sponsor, please contact any member of the executive.

I'd like to thank the club officers and members of the executive committee of 2020 for the work they do for the club behind the scenes, and the way they unselfishly give up their time for the betterment of the club. It is so important to have an active and enthusiastic executive to guide the club in the right direction. Although in 2020 it wasn't easy to be as active but thanks to technology, the executive held its meetings online when restrictions would not allow indoor meetings. There is always room for more on the executive, especially those new to the area or those with new and fresh ideas that can benefit the club in the long run. If you are interested in joining the executive, please contact any member of the current executive for more information.

I'd also like to thank all coaches who through rain, wind or snow, coach our players to have fun and improve as players. This can sometimes be a thankless job, and while it is time consuming, it can be very rewarding also. In 2020, there was the added challenge of trying to keep everyone active during lockdown. Like everything else, training too went online, with drills and exercises being sent to senior players and all parents of underage players in order to keep active and fit during this time. Without our coaches, there would not be any teams, so again, thanks to all coaches. Also thanks to all the parents and players who attend all trainings and games. Without you, it would not be possible to field so many teams, and your support on the side line is vital to the players during games. If there are any other players or coaches out there that would like to get involved, please contact any of our existing coaches or executive members.

I mentioned the help and support that Ciarán has given to me since taking on this role at the beginning of this report. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the club's assistant secretary, Paul Judge, for his help and guidance also. This has been greatly appreciated. To the many others who have assisted me since taking over this role, I also wish to thank you all. I'd also like to thank to Carmel Taheny for compiling this year's AGM booklet as well as to Avril East who assisted with this. As always, having this booklet to accompany our AGM is something we are most grateful for.

Congratulations to all who got married, engaged and those who had new additions to the family in 2020. I would also like to offer sincere condolences to all those who suffered bereavements during the year. This year was an exceptionally difficult year for anyone who may have lost a family member, friend or neighbour. Just remember that we are a community, and as a community, we are all together. Mar a deireann an seanfhocal: "ar scáth a chéile a mhaireann na daoine."

I apologise if there are any omissions or errors in this report, and if there are any, I can assure you it is not intentional by any means.

Here's to a fun, successful and healthy 2021!

I submit this report to our members for ratification at our AGM.

Is mise le meas,

Tomás Ó Murchú

Rúnaí

Clairsigh an Oirthear